



Sea Solutions provides safety and education for regarding Aruba's coastline environment

On Friday morning, the Holiday Inn conducted their monthly employee meeting, during which they share hotel news, award the "Employee of the Month," and provide a very nice lunch for their workers. Human Resources Director Sandra Curtis organizes the monthly event, and General Manager Guillermo Valencia attended, presenting this month's award to Ciro Tromp in landscaping.

Holiday Inn management also chose during this meeting to educate their employees on what they consider a vital issue, protection of Aruba's coastline and undersea environment. To this purpose, they invited Ulysses Matarozzi, Director of Sea Solutions, a company he formed recently to maintain safe swimming zones and to clean up underwater debris to address the gathering.

Attempts have been made in the past to mark swimming zones and protect them from boat traffic, both by the government and by the Aruba Watersports Association (AWA,) which was founded in 1994 in an attempt to harbor cooperation amongst watersports operations and maintain standards of quality while protecting the environment. As is often the case in an organization that operates strictly on a volunteer basis, the time needed to maintain a buoy system was not available. Ulysses, who was involved with AWA, and has always had a love concern for the sea, saw a need, and a solution. His new company, Sea Solutions, places safety buoys to mark off the swim areas, and additionally goes out daily to clean under the water, something that is done by a public volunteer effort once or twice a year, which not sufficient.

Ulysses started with the Westin Resort, where Rob Smith gave him a chance to show the viability of his plan. He now has twelve hotels under contract, including the Holiday Inn, and Hurricane Dean was the proof positive that his idea worked. "The most important aspect of protecting the buoys and ropes from the rough seas is simply maintenance and keeping them clean," reports Ulysses. "The additional weight of sea growth on the ropes makes them vulnerable during high seas." The rough waters of Dean left hotels not under contract with Sea Solutions without their swimming area markers, but those that have used Ulysses' service suffered no damage.

Ulysses' concerns go beyond safety to protection of the underwater environment, and he has declared war on what is likely the worst enemy to sea life, plastic. Guillermo Valencia supports him completely in this cause, and during the meeting, exhorted his employees to take care in the use of disposable plastic items. "Plastic straws, cups, Styrofoam food containers; all these are deadly to sea life," explained Ulysses. "They are not biodegradable, they will stay under the sea forever, and some creatures will try to eat them, mistaking them for jellyfish, a favorite food. Then the animals will choke to death. If they are not eaten, they sit on the bottom, become brittle, and break into tiny particles. This is another deadly consequence, as fish life obtains their oxygen by passing water over their gills. All those plastic particles are the same as if humans are trying to breathe air full of volcanic ash. It will eventually kill everything in the sea."

Ulysses was invited by the Holiday Inn to make his presentation to their employees, as he would like to do for all hotels, businesses, and schools. "Island visitors can also do their part," he asserts, "by taking care with cups and food containers, and disposing of them properly. Aruba has very high winds, which will blow these things right out to sea. They cannot be left unattended, they must be thrown away immediately, or they will become a hazard." Ulysses and his crew uses special equipment to sweep the sea around Aruba, and dive to remove refuse, but consumer awareness and cooperation is vital. "We are killing our seas, destroying an important source of beauty and food, and we all need to be environmentally aware and considerate."

Ulysses considers himself fortunate to be able to make a living out of a cause that concerns him, and he is providing a solution to the swim zone situation with his dedicated service, which has been something of a dilemma for hotel operators for decades. Those wishing more information on his services, or to have him lecture on undersea environment protection can contact him on his cell at 741-3579 or via e-mail matarozz@setarnet.aw.